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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000678

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BAGHDAD FOR DMCCULLOUGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/13/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [CVIS](#) [KCOR](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: BETWEEN THE LINES OF PRESS REPORTS ON KBR  
SCANDAL

REF: ABUJA 259

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b  
& d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Beginning in late March, Nigeria's Attorney General (AG) Michael Aondoakaa, has been manipulating the media coverage of the Department of Justice's February 11 press release related to former Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KBR) Director Albert "Jack" Stanley's guilty plea of conspiring to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), including by bribing Nigerian government officials. Since Aondoakaa's press statements, Nigerian news media have continued to quickly seize on the AG's public remarks and have been in a frenzy to uncover the names of the "Nigerian officials" it suspects were involved in the scandal. Aondoakaa, reputedly one of the GON's most corrupt cabinet members, is using this coverage to his personal advantage by portraying the USG as reluctant to cooperate in the GON's own investigation of the matter. At the same time, he is portraying himself as tremendously eager to find and punish those responsible. Aondoakaa may also believe that his "spin" will bolster his own credentials and change his negative image, as well as promote the impression within the international community that the GON is serious about combating corruption. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND: ALL ABOARD THE ANTI-CORRUPTION BANDWAGON

12. (SBU) On February 11, DOJ announced that former KBR Director, Albert "Jack" Stanley, pleaded guilty to bribing Nigerian officials from 1994-2005 to obtain contracts to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities valued at more than \$6 billion. (FYI: In Nigeria, the case is known as the "Halliburton scandal," for KBR's former parent company. End FYI.) While Stanley admitted that he and others met with three successive Nigerian heads of state, no Nigerian government officials have been mentioned by name in any of DOJ's public filings or announcements. Soon after the DOJ press release, the Nigerian news media seized on the story, and began speculating on which Nigerians are implicated in

the scandal. The media's list of reported names reads like a Who's Who of Nigeria's power elite. It includes former Nigerian Heads of State Sani Abacha and Olusegun Obasanjo, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, former Petroleum Ministers Dan Etete and Don Etiebet, a former Inspector General of Police (and President Yar'Adua's cousin) Mohammed Dikko Yusufu, former Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Funsho Kupolokun, and several senior aides to these individuals.

BETWEEN THE LINES OF NIGERIA'S MEDIA

13. (S/NF) GON AG Aondoakaa is manipulating the media frenzy over the case to portray himself as an anti-corruption crusader. Beginning on March 30, Aondoakaa has made repeated press statements suggesting that he is eager to prosecute those responsible, as well as to repatriate the illicit bribes. He maintains he is "still waiting" for a response from the USG to his letters requesting, in accordance with the terms of the U.S.-Nigeria Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), the release of names of the Nigerian officials implicated in the corruption case. In addition, Nigeria's Minister of Information, Dora Akunyili, announced on national television on April 7 that she had written three letters to the USG requesting the release of details of the scandal "to fast-track investigations and prosecution." Also on April 7, Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) announced to newspapers that it had requested that the AG's Office release details about the Nigerians implicated in the case.

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14. (S/NF) The disingenuousness of GON posturing is confirmed by one of the EFCC's lead prosecutors, Festus Keyamo (strictly protect), who told PolOff on April 14 that "the EFCC was aware of the Nigerians implicated back in 2006 and already has its own files on the case." In a March 25 op-ed, Chudi Offodile, former Chairman of the Nigerian House of Representatives Public Petitions Committee (which was charged with investigating the bribery case) added that the EFCC's knowledge of the investigation dates back to 2004. This was corroborated by Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit's (NFIU) International Relations Liaison Tukur Modibbo (strictly protect) who told INLOff on April 3 that all of the names of the Nigerian officials implicated in the bribery scheme were known to both the NFIU and EFCC (both of which come under the authority of the AG) since 2004.

15. (S/NF) COMMENT: We understand that DOJ received Aondoakaa's letters, dated February 17 and March 27, only on April 1 -- i.e., after Aondoakaa's press statements accusing the USG of unresponsiveness. The AG is clearly using the media to improve his own image, working to portray himself as an effective and serious anti-corruption crusader when of course he is neither. END COMMENT.

17. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.  
SANDERS